

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in telephone interviews with Thomas Wiseman on 1/16/08. The application has been amended as follows:

- a. In claim 1, line 2, insert ---liquid— right before “xenon”.
- b. In claim 2, line 2, delete [suitable] right before “precursor”.
- c. In claim 4, line 2, delete [suitable] right before “precursor”.
- d. In claim 6, line 2, delete [suitable] right before “precursor”.
- e. In claim 6, line 4, add ---to form a xenongel— between “xenon” and “;”.
- f. In claim 6, line 5, delete [aquagel] and replace with ---xenongel--- right after “from the”.
- g. In claim 10, line 2, delete [comprises] and replace with ---further comprising--- right before “recovering”.

Reasons for allowance

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The closest prior art is Graser et al. (US4667417) which describes replacing the water in a hydrogel (also known as an aquagel) with a water-miscible organic medium, then replacing the water-miscible organic medium with liquid carbon dioxide followed by supercritical drying. However, Graser et al. does not teach using xenon or any other noble gas nor does any other prior art of record. There is also nothing of record that indicates that using xenon would be obvious in this process.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

1. All the pending claims are allowed.
2. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to ANTHONY J. ZIMMER whose telephone number is (571)270-3591. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 7:30 AM - 5:00 PM EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Vickie Kim can be reached on 571-272-0579. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Ajz

/Vickie Kim/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 4116